News release

28 February 2007

Met Office wins Health and Social Care innovation award

The Met Office Health Forecasting Team has won the Innovative Services Award at the prestigious Health and Social Care Awards 2006. The award recognises an innovative, new or improved service that is benefiting the delivery of healthcare for patients, users and carers.

The ground-breaking Met Office Health Forecasting Service alerts healthcare professionals and patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) when weather conditions and respiratory infections are likely to increase the risk of a worsening of symptoms.

The Health Forecasting Service has contributed to a reduction in hospital admissions for COPD by up to 75% across participating GP practices. Dr Tish Laing-Morton, Clinical Director at the Met Office said: "This is tremendous news, but more importantly the forecast service helps patients to understand their condition, know better how to self care, and achieve their potential for independence and wellbeing".

The innovative service was developed in a unique collaboration between the Met Office and the NHS and includes educational packs for patients and training sessions for clinicians.

Future developments in the service will bring the health forecasts and education directly to the patient through an automated telephone service, currently being trialled in Cornwall and Kent.

More about the Met Office Health Forecasting Service

Notes to editors:

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is an umbrella term for a number of chronic lung disorders, including chronic bronchitis, emphysema, chronic obstructive airway disease and chronic airway flow limitation.
- The natural environment affects human health. The Met Office specially produced health forecasts help professionals and patients know when and where there is a risk of illness. Through this understanding, action can be taken by both healthcare providers and individuals to help prevent hospital admissions and improve patient self management.
- The Met Office is the UK's national weather service, providing 24 x 7 world-renowned scientific excellence in weather, climate and environmental forecasts and severe weather warnings for the protection of life and property.
- Met Office data and services are used by other government departments and agencies; the private sector and the public.
- The annual Health and Social Care Awards exist to celebrate the immense pool of talent and initiative in health and social care. They are run in partnership between the Department of Health and the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement and are the most important opportunity within the NHS and social care to identify, recognise and reward excellence in the provision of care at the frontline.

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